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appears in the shape of a wolf, and the sick person dies. As long as the body lies in the house, the soul hovers over it. But immediately after burial, it re-enters the body, which then rises up three times in the grave. Thereafter, the soul flies up to Heaven, and there is has to fly through seven circles, until it is received by the Barastyr, the lord of the realm of the dead, who sends it either to Paradise (dzänät) or to Hell (zyndon). In the world of the dead, souls again assume the shape of human beings, live and grow old like human beings. But when they reach old age, they are rejuvenated by eating the flesh of the dragon Ruimon who was born blind on the earth and frightens human beings by roaring and makes them die. It is Vatsilla, Saint Elijah, who saves them by letting down a chain, binding him and pulling him up, whereupon the spirits in Heaven hack pieces of flesh from his body and distribute them among the dead.

There is a judge functioning in the world of the dead, whose name issaid to be Aminon. At the bridge where its fate is decided, he asks the soul about the good and evil deeds it has done and shows the good soul the way to Paradise, whereas the evil soul is sent to Hell.

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It seems appropriate in this context to mention the Ossetic legends which describe and extol the wonderful deeds of the Narti, a tribe of mighty heroes, who fight innumerable

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battles with supernatural strength and wild cruelty. Although these legends are more mythological than strictly religious in character, they sometimes contain details which belong to the sphere of religion in the proper sense of the word. It would not be feasible here to give a detailed or even an abridged account of the great variety of stories, events, adventures and fabulous deeds, with which we are confronted in these legends. The following brief remarks will be sufficient to provide an insight into the character and the spirit of these legends, though these remarks refer only to one of the Narti heroes, the most powerful of them. His name is Batraz. He was born in a miraculous way from a tumor between the shoulders of his father after the time required for a normal human pregnancy. The tumor had been produced when his mother had breathed upon the place between his father's shoulders. After his birth, Batraz was thrown into the sea where he appeared as huge as a mountain. When he had mounted his father's horse in order to go home, he broke the horse's ribs by the pressure of his knees, and it died. After he had been carried home by another horse, he asked the heavenly blacksmith Kurdalagon to expose him to the fire of the forge, so that he would become as hard as steel and be better fit for combating enemies. When after two weeks his body had been thoroughly heated by the fire without having suffered any harm, Batraz asked the blacksmith to throw him into the ocean. The blacksmith complied with his

C. O. 773 request, and as soon as the hot body reached the sea, the water began to seethe and dried out completely for two weeks. The water came back after Bertraz had left the sea: he had become steel.

C. O. 773 177 There are many more similar fantastic stories, which extoll the deeds of, and to a large extent mirror the life and way of thinking, of the rough-mannered inhabitants of one of the wild rugged mountain regions of the Caucasus. However, it is very uncertain whether those legends of the Narti which have been transmitted in the Ossetic language represent, as has been asserted, the original version and the source of the essentially coincident versions transmitted in some of the non-Iranian languages of the Caucasus. As a matter of fact, neither the names of the heroes nor the character of the stories seem to point to an Iranian origin. (The attempt made by Georges Dumézil in "Légendes sur les Nartes" [Bibliothèque de l'Institut Français de Leningrad, Tome XI] to identify Batraz and another figure of the legends with two figures of the Indo-Iranian mythology is far from convincing.)

There is only one rather loose and obviously not original connection of the cycle of Narti legends with a genuine Iranian motif. It is the figure of the mighty bird Sīmurgh, the Eagle, well-known from the Shāhnāma of the Persian poet Firdousī, which has been attached to the story of the extermination of the Narti.

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After God had destroyed them by fire because of their disobedience and arrogance, the earth was populated by small human beings, and the bird Sīmurgh looks down upon them from his lofty throne which stands on the immeasurably high Mt. Elburz. In one of the most famous episodes of the Persian epic poem, Simurgh's nest on the peak of the Elburz plays an important role.

Even more conspicuous is the Iranian element in certain other stories handed down in non-Iranian languages, such as the two stories presented in German translation by A. Dirr in Kaukasische Märchen, (Jena, 1920, pp. 210ff., No. 58 [in the Udin language], and pp. 219ff. No. 59 [in Tater],) in which we meet the figure of Rustam, the most celebrated hero of the Shāhnāma. It is true that the whole setting of the stories, the kind of deeds performed by the hero and the circumstances under which he acts are largely different from those of the Persian epic, by far more fantastic and often out of all proportion. But the Iranian influence is nevertheless striking. For the two non-Iranian narratives do not have only the name and the supernatural strength of the hero in common with the Persian epic poem. We also find in them a very characteristic and essential feature of the Iranian Rustam legend, i.e. the important part which Sīmurgh, the eagle, plays in the life of the hero. In the Shāhnāma, Rustam's father, Zāl, who had been exposed on Mt. Elburz as a baby, was brought up by Sīmurgh together with his young ones in a nest

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on the top of the mountain. When he had grown up and had to return to his family, the eagle gave him one of his feathers, with the advice to set fire to it in case of imminent danger. Then the eagle would appear at once and bring help. In fact, this need for help arose, when the birth of Rustam caused great difficulties and danger to his mother's life. As soon as his father had kindled the feather, the eagle appeared, foretold the birth of a huge heavy child, a future hero, and declared the necessity of performing a Caesarian operation. Among the instructions for treating the mother's wound, rubbing it with the feather of the eagle is mentioned. The appearance of the eagle immediately after one of his feathers has been set on fire at a time of peril, and the magical healing power of the feather when a wound is rubbed with it, are distinctly reflected in the two stories handed down in non-Iranian languages. It is noteworthy that this motif of the eagle and his magical feather also occurs in a story of an Iranian tribe, the Bakhtiyaris. But it is also found in a passage of the Avesta, the holy stripctures of the Zoroastrians, and it has been previously stated by the present author that this conception played an important part in the ritual of ancient India and is also widespread in the folklore of modern India. (See Bernhard Geiger, Die Amesha Spentas, pp. 73f.)

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The legend of Prometheus also deserves our special attention. It is transmitted in Ossetic and in some of the Caucasian languages.

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171 (See the German translations in A. Dirr's Kaukasische Märchen, [Jena 1920], pp. 236-248.) According to the Ossetic version, a godless oppressor by the name of Amiran was punished by God, who ordered him placed in chains and closed up in a cave. A shepherd who was wandering around in the mountains heard the cried of pain uttered by the titan Amiran who was trying deparately, but in vain, to free himself from the fetters. After some time, the shepherd suddenly found an opening leading into the inside of the cave. He made futile attempts to hand to the titan the extremely heavy sword which was lying at his side. Then the shepherd was asked by Amiran to fetch from his own house the hearth chain by which the kettle hangs over the fire, and he is warned not to speak a single word on his way back to the mountain; for otherwise his help would be in vain. However, the shepherd's wife, plagued by curiosity, urged him incessantly to tell her the purpose of carrying the hearth chain to the mountains. (For a chain above the hearth and the sinfulness of its removal, see above.)[1] He remained silent, but at last could not refrain from telling her to keep quiet; he would tell her the reason later. Because he broke the proscribed silence, the entrance of the cave in which he had found the titan, closed up, and the titan could no longer be freed. He remained chained to the rock. Food and water were brought to him by a raven. Whenever

[1] [cf. cat. 116, p. 566 -- Analyst]

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171 Prometheus attempts to break his fetters, groaning and wailing, the mountains shake, the earth shivers, thunder rumbles and rocks fall down into the valleys. He will remain imprisoned and suffering until God delivers him.